The Architecture of Elsew**here**.

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The Architecture of Elsewhere -
Dreaming as a Cognitive Spatial System in Architecture

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To Mom and Dad,

the quiet architecture beneath my becoming,
whose faith has carried my dreams.

To Professor Nancy,

for guiding me through every challenge in this
research with a rare attentiveness and delicacy.

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Abstract.

This research investigates dream logic as a cognitive spatial system through which architectural space can be reconsidered as a lived, remembered, and emotionally structured experience. Dreams are examined as internally constructed spatial environments shaped by memory, perception, and affect rather than physical law. While dream content varies among individuals, dream environments consistently demonstrate how spatial coherence can emerge through fragmentation, irregular scale, shifting atmospheres, and nonlinear sequencing. These characteristics reveal how the mind organizes spatial experience through cognitive and emotional processes, offering insight into the internal mechanisms of spatial perception.

Rather than proposing prescriptive design methods, this research investigates dream logic as a cognitive mode of spatial organization and explores diagrammatic representation as an interpretive framework for understanding subconscious spatial experience in architecture. Through phenomenological analysis, visual exploration, and precedent study, the research reframes architectural space as a temporally unfolding and cognitively constructed environment. In doing so, it positions dream logic not as a stylistic reference, but as a conceptual framework that expands architectural discourse toward a deeper understanding of how space is mentally constructed and experienced.

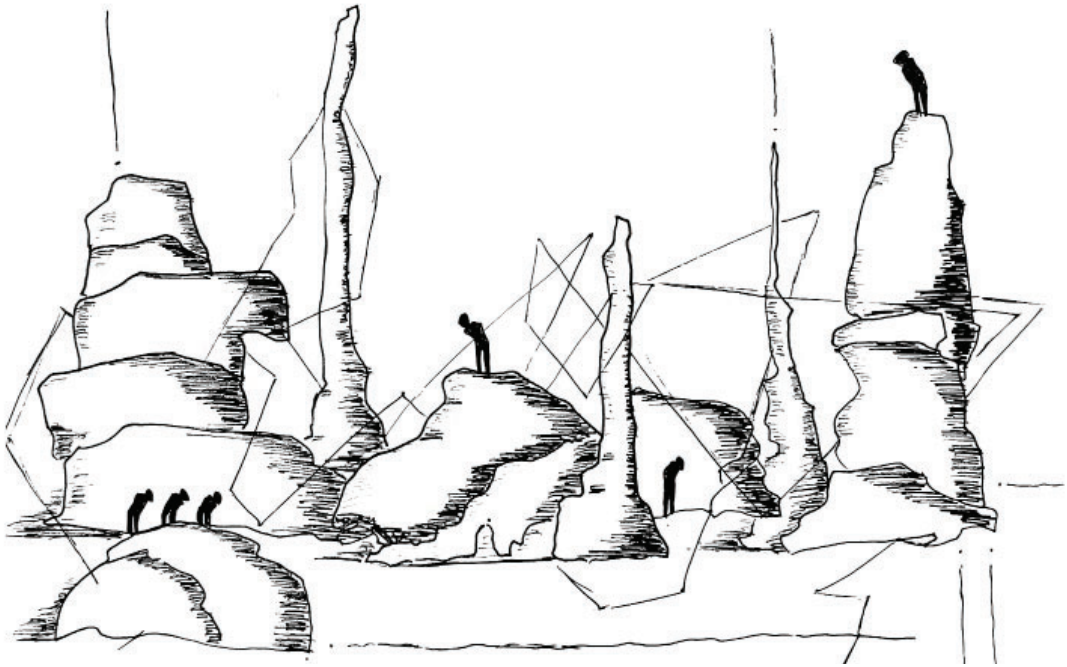
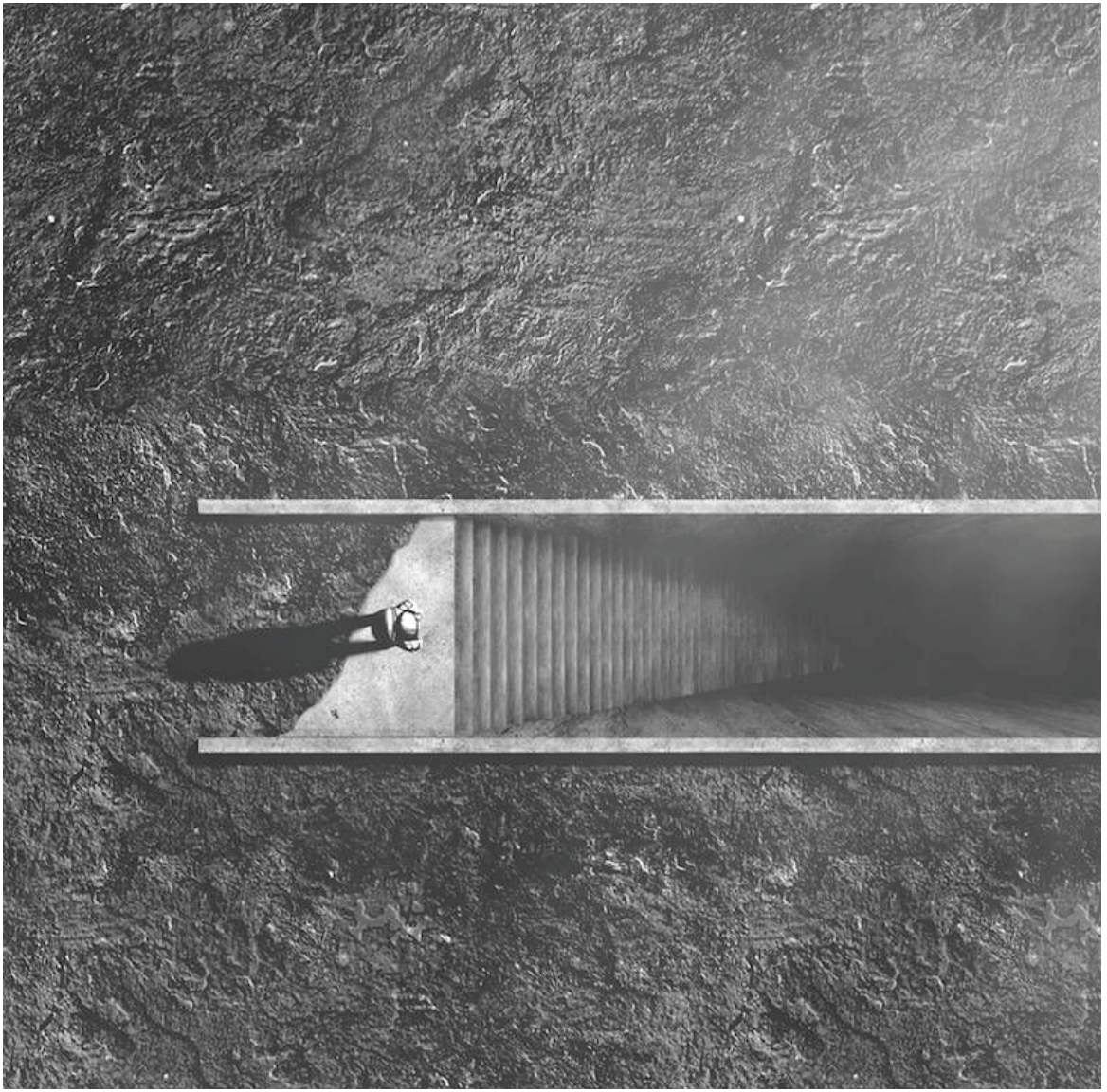


Fig. 1



Lunar Stair, Nicholas Stathopoulos, [Digital Art], 2015

Introduction.

In scientific discourse, dreaming is often described as a neurological process associated with memory consolidation[43] [55]. In psychological theory, dreams are understood as expressions of the unconscious, where perception, memory, and imagination converge to form spatial experiences that are internally coherent despite their instability[45] [46] [9]. While dream content differs among individuals, dreamscapes suggest how the mind constructs, distorts, and reorganizes spatial relationships[41] [38].

Dreaming can be understood as a mode of spatial cognition in which the mind becomes its own architect. Memories are rearranged, emotions surface, and imagined environments emerge that defy physical logic while maintaining experiential coherence[43] [53] [20].

These dream environments are not random hallucinations, but structured spatial conditions formed through cognitive and emotional processes[9] [55] [4].

Architecture, like dreaming, mediates human experience through space. Both shape perception, meaning, and memory, and both translate intangible qualities such as atmosphere, anticipation, and imagination into lived spatial experience[34] [21]. Yet architectural discourse rarely examines how dream environments operate as cognitive systems, despite their relevance to understanding how space is internally perceived and remembered[20].

Surrealism, a movement heavily influenced by psychological theories of dreaming, offers an alternative lens for understanding and representing dream logic. The reference to surrealism is crucial to this discussion because of its strong ideological alignment with dream logic, as many surrealist practices across art, music, literature, architecture, and other fields sought to illustrate the underlying mechanisms of dreaming[44 7]. These practices often translate and associate their works with dream-like conditions such as fragmentation, symbolic transformation, and nonlinear association. As Kotowicz suggests in Gaston Bachelard: A Philosophy of the Surreal (2016), surrealism depicts the realm between reality and imagination, revealing the oneiric qualities of human experience within spatial structures[48]. By understanding the history, development, and implications of surrealism in human culture, particularly in architecture, it becomes possible to further examine the relationship between dreams and architecture.

This research explores dream logic as an alternative lens through which architectural phenomenology can be understood, and space can be investigated. Rather than treating dreams as symbolic narratives or sources of visual inspiration, the research focuses on dreaming as a cognitive mode of spatial organization. By examining how spatial coherence emerges within dream environments, the research seeks to expand architectural thinking about experience, perception, and the mental construction of space[43 4].

WHAT ARE DREAMS?

New Dreams of Happiness, Max Klinger, [Etching and engraving]1887-1903.

Nestor appearing in a dream to Agamemnon, James Heath, [Etching and engraving].1805.

“The Land of Dreams”

in Odyssey, Homer, 750 BCE

A mythical and liminal realm located at the edge of the world, a boundary between reality and a world of phantoms, a place where reality dissolves, and everything becomes fluid and uncertain.

Dreams in Ancient Greek + Roman History, 2100 BCE | Dreams serve as the medium connecting the parallel worlds, where gods and spirits communicate with the sleeping mortals, delivering messages, warnings, and guidance.

Dreams in Modern Time | Dreams are the paths to one’s psyche, the understanding of one’s inner world and wisdom.

Alcyone Dreaming, Charles Constans, [Lithograph], 19th Century.

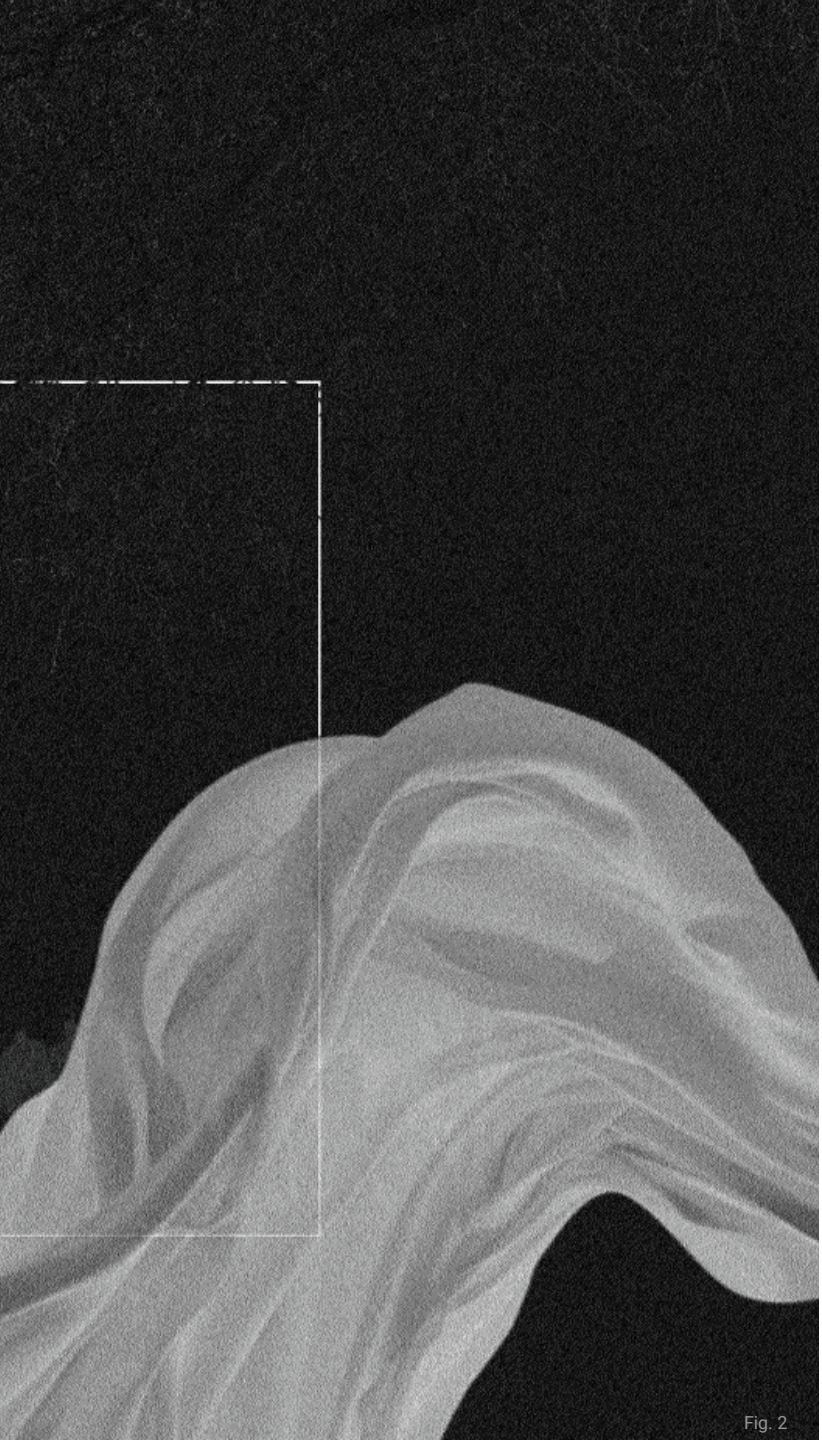


Fig. 2

I HAD A

FLASHBACK

TO

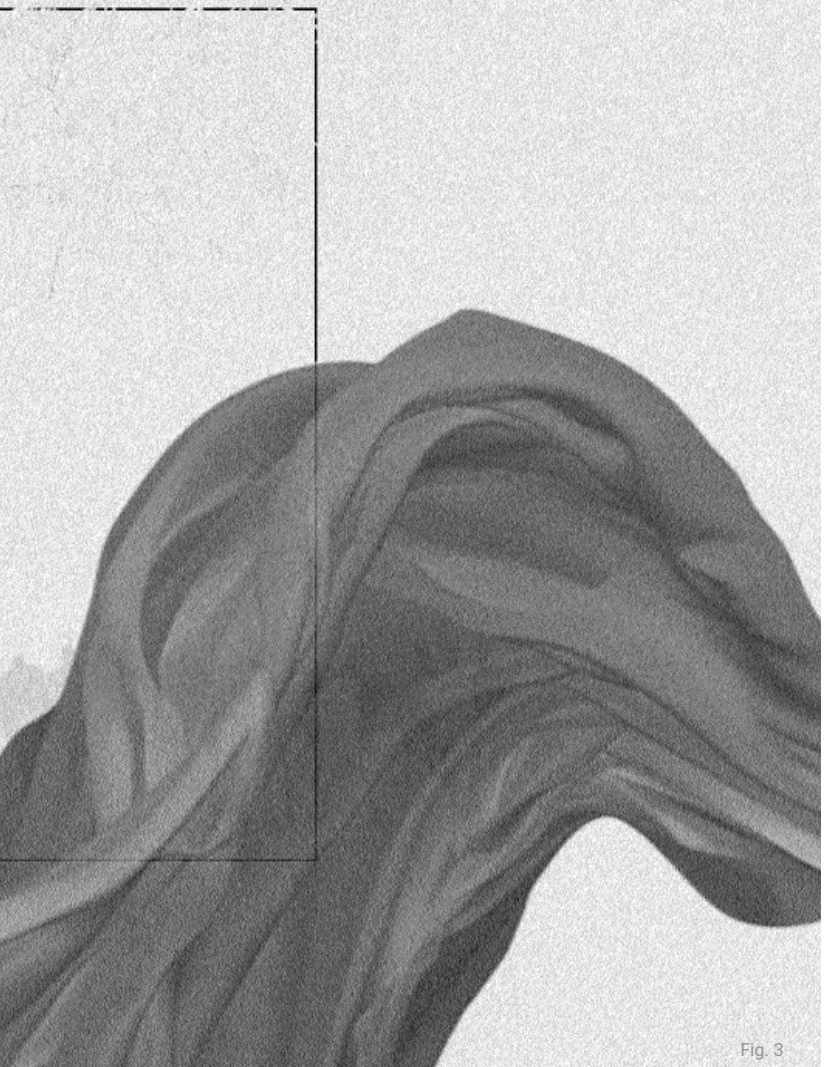


Fig. 3

SOMEWHERE

THAT

NEVER

EXISTED

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Sigmund Freud and Albert Eistein [Photography] n.d.

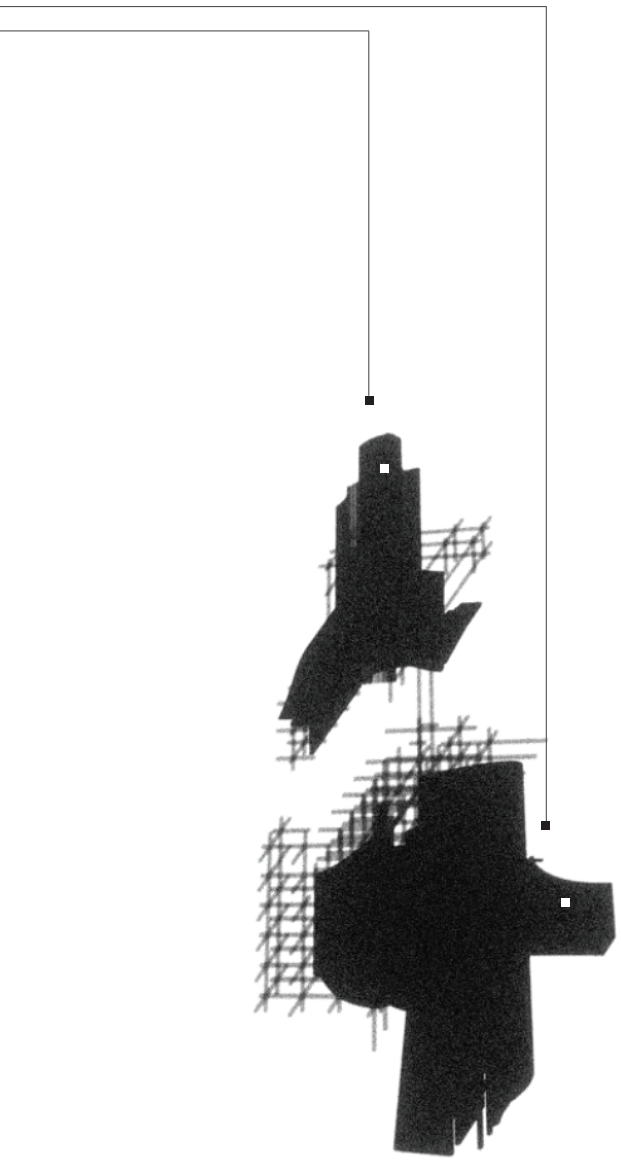


Fig. 4

To understand the characters of dreams, one has to look at dream study from two perspectives and disciplines:

[PSYCHOLOGY]

[NEUROLOGY]

The Purpose + Construction of Dreams.

The study of dreams dates back to ancient times, with numerous historical records describing the phenomenon and mechanisms of dreaming[40] [8] [50] [19]. Despite extensive research by modern scientists, neurologists, and psychoanalysts, there remains a realm of uncertainty and unresolved questions surrounding dreams. Dreaming continues to appear as an explorable subject with an open field for investigation in relation to theoretical interpretation, scientific exploration, and human cognition[17] [55]. Nevertheless, multiple disciplines have provided important insights into the nature of consciousness and its relationship to the unconscious. Dreams have consistently enhanced and empowered investigations across the disciplines of across the disciplines of science and art. Multiple disciplines have frequent -ly drawn on dream psychology and its realm of intention and potential as a source of inspiration for their studies.

Art movements such as surrealism and symbolism were developed and practiced on the basis of the foundational logic of dreams, which later inspired literature, cinema, and music[7]. Dreams are not passive experiences but phenomena that have long been recognized for their psychological depth and interpretive significance. For this research specifically, dreams offer insights into behavior and cognition that inform the study of human perception and spatial experience[5]. However, before exploring the relationship between dreams and architecture, it is essential to first understand the psychological theories that explain how dreams function within the human mind[55].

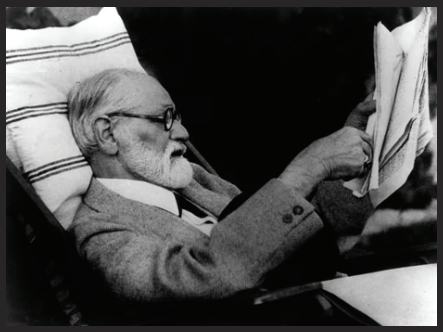
Contemporary dream studies and interpretations often come from two approaches:

[Psychology] The cognitive function of dreams (the purpose of dreams)

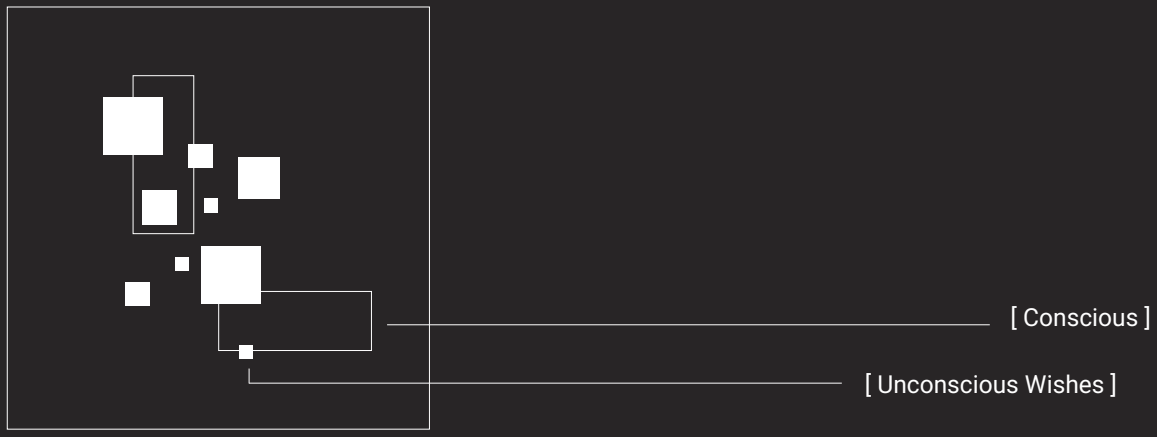
[Neurology] The physical mechanisms of dreaming (the construction of dreams)

In the discipline of psychology, theories often interpret dreams as symbolic experiences and narratives shaped by unconscious psychological processes[9] [17] [36]. Early psychoanalytic theories attempted to explain the purpose of dream images and narratives.

Sigmund Freud

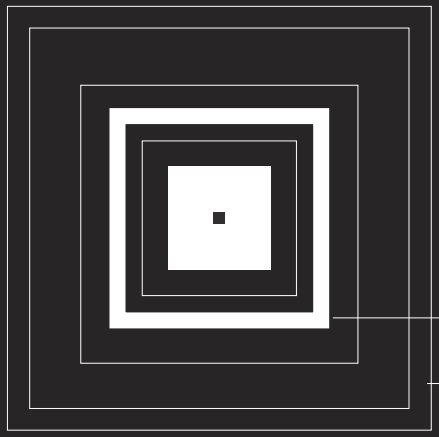


argued that dreams are expressions of suppressed desire, trauma, and instinct. Freud's theory of dreams consists of two layers: "manifest content," referring to the pragmatic and literal narrative of the dream, including its images, characters, and events experienced by the dreamer, whereas "latent content" represents the unconscious desires, the forbidden layer hidden beneath the surface, often disturbing and socially unacceptable[44]. He claims that the psychological mechanisms of condensation, displacement, and symbolic representation in the mind transform latent psychological material into dream imagery and that this dream work reorganizes the dreamer's memory fragments into narratives and spatial scenes[44] [43].



Carl Jung

argued that dream environments are symbolic structures representing the psyche itself. He believes that dreaming is a compensatory process for repairing and restoring psychological balance, rather than merely random distortions and disguised wishes[26]. Jung argues that dreams are self-regulating messages from the psyche and serve as a medium that compensates for aspects of experience the conscious mind may neglect, repress, or overemphasize. Hence, dreaming becomes an essential psychological process for developing inner wisdom in the psyche. Jung further emphasized that dream imagery expresses and interprets mental and emotional states, and that the true purpose of dreaming .is to fulfill psychological wholeness[26] [17].



“Le rêve exprimerait donc le mode de réaction de l’âme, pendant l’état de sommeil, aux excitations qu’elle subit.”

The dream then expresses a way
for the soul to react to the stimuli
it endures while sleeping.

Sigmund Freud, 1916

Building on psychological theories, neuroscience often frames dreaming as a process related to memory consolidation and emotion regulation in the human mind. Koslowski et al. argue that the human mind is constantly attempting to regulate internal states to maintain balance between emotional and bodily needs, a process known as homeostasis[36]. Homeostasis generates a sequence of behaviors that correspond to psychological needs, ranging from safety and comfort to curiosity and the avoidance of threat and danger[36]. In a dream, similar neural activity also produces scenes and symbolic cues that help process psychological experience. In this sense, rather than hallucinations, dreams are understood as structured worlds that lend meaning to human experience[4] [43]. Both psychological theories and contemporary scientific research have hence suggested that dreaming is crucial to the development and functioning of human cognition. In relation to architecture, the mechanisms and systems of dreaming reveal how the mind constructs spatial meaning, highlighting the importance of studying and integrating human spatial cognition within architectural design[55] [36].

Spatial Cognition in Dreams and Architecture.

Spatial cognition encompasses the mental processes that enable individuals to perceive, organize, and navigate spatial environments, such as architectural structures or landscapes[13]. Although spatial environments are typically defined by the physical arrangement of forms, the human mind interprets spatial relationships through internal psychological representations, including perception, movement, and mental interpretation[67]. Cognitive science research indicates that individuals interpret and anticipate spatial conditions through the interplay of sensory perception and mental representation, facilitating navigation and comprehension of their surroundings[46]. These processes support effective orientation and wayfinding in complex spatial contexts[18].

As architectural theorists and psychologists frequently emphasize, people do not experience space solely through interaction with the physical configuration of buildings and environments, but through cognitive processes that enable psychological interpretation. Upon encountering a space, mechanisms such as anticipation, orientation, and spatial reasoning guide individuals in perceiving and organizing spatial environments[33]. Research suggests that individuals navigate unfamiliar environments and organize spatial knowledge by constructing relationships between landmarks, routes, and environmental elements[66] [31]. Through repeated encounters with space, these relationships are internalized as cognitive maps, enabling individuals to interpret and navigate spatial conditions beyond immediate physical presence[62].

The temporal nature of space suggests that visual representation and formal consistency in architecture are not the most crucial or sole dependence of spatial perception. Instead, spatial meaning emerges through the body's ongoing experience as it moves through the environment and through the formation of memories correlated with this environment over time[34] [35]. In relation to spatial environments in dreams, where physical structures are often displaced and disoriented within dreamscapes, understanding architecture as a temporally unfolding experience provides an important framework for investigating such internally constructed spatial relationships[67] [4].

A similar process can be observed in dream environments. During sleep, particularly in REM phases, spatial scenes and landscapes unfold dynamically alongside the evolving dream narrative, suggesting an active cognitive construction of space[43] [55]. In this sense, dreaming generates an alternative mode of spatial cognition. Likewise, in waking experience, as the body approaches, enters, and navigates a space, the psyche simultaneously organizes and constructs a narrative of that environment[67] [28]. As Kevin Lynch describes in The Image of the City, spatial understanding emerges not from abstract geometry but from accumulated experiential impressions of paths, nodes, districts, and landmarks[31]. These architectural images persist within the mind, continuing to structure spatial perception even in the absence of the physical environment[34].

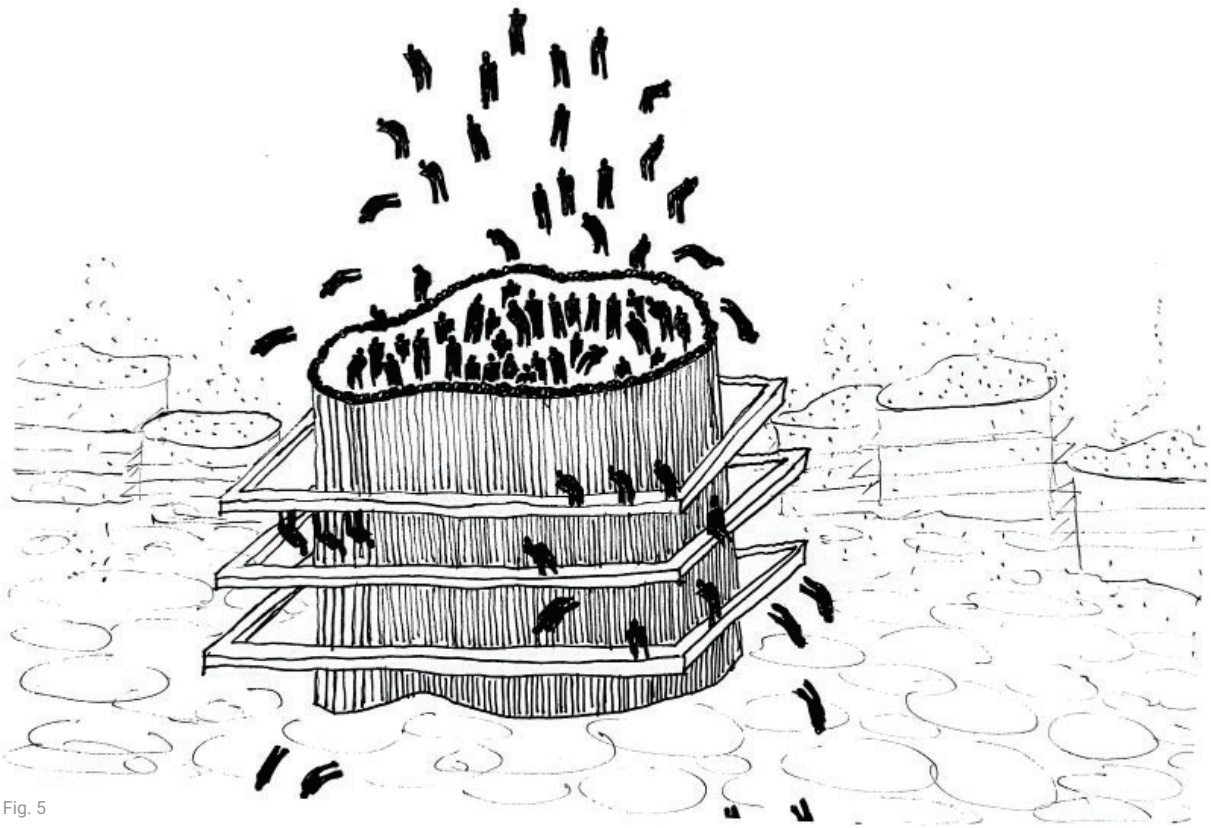


Fig. 5

Psychological activities involving sequence, anticipation, and memory, therefore, play an important role in shaping spatial perception[39] [34]. This relationship between spatial imagery and the human psyche becomes particularly evident in the study of dreams. Carl Jung, for instance, interprets the recurring image of the house in dreams as a representation of the psyche itself, where different spatial levels correspond to layers of consciousness and the unconscious mind[25]. These phenomenological perspectives reveal that spatial images can organize cognitive and emotional experience, even within internally constructed environments such as dreams.

Early psychoanalytic theories of dreaming describe a similar phenomenon. Freud describes dreams as the transformation of latent psychological content into visual imagery during sleep[3], while Jung argues that dream environments represent symbolic structures of the psyche itself[25]. Therefore, imagery of spatial environments in dreams, often referred to as dreamscapes, is generated by psychological processes rather than direct inspiration from constructed physical forms that follow Euclidean logic[3]. In these interpretations, dream imagery is frequently composed of reconstructed fragments of perception and subconscious associations[25].

Contemporary psychologists and neuroscientists further suggest that dreaming involves the activation and recombination of perceptual systems within the brain[43] [17]. Research in cognitive neuroscience indicates that the sleeping brain can generate internally constructed environments even in the absence of external sensory input[43]. Revonsuo further argues that these processes allow the mind to produce environments that **may lack physical consistency yet remain spatially understandable to the dreamer**. Only through dreaming is the mind fully capable of imagining spatial scenes without the principles of stability that characterize the physical world. Architectural elements and landscapes in dreamscapes are often interpreted as reflections of how the mind reorganizes spatial impressions into visual scenes[52]. From which, therefore, explains why **dream environments may include floating architecture, irregular forms, or geometries that are impossible to construct in reality**. This also reinforces the argument that spatial relationships are processed at cognitive and psychological levels rather than solely through physical structures[22]. Understanding spatial cognition from both psychological and neurological perspectives is thus relevant to examining how spatial environments are mentally constructed and interpreted.

what do you see

in those dreams ?

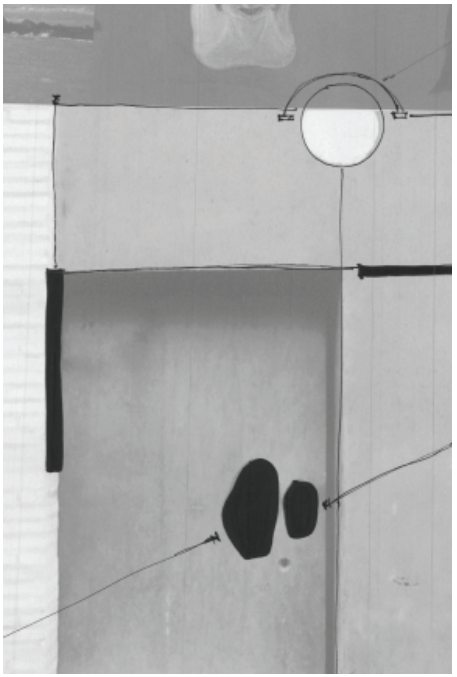


Fig. 6 | 7

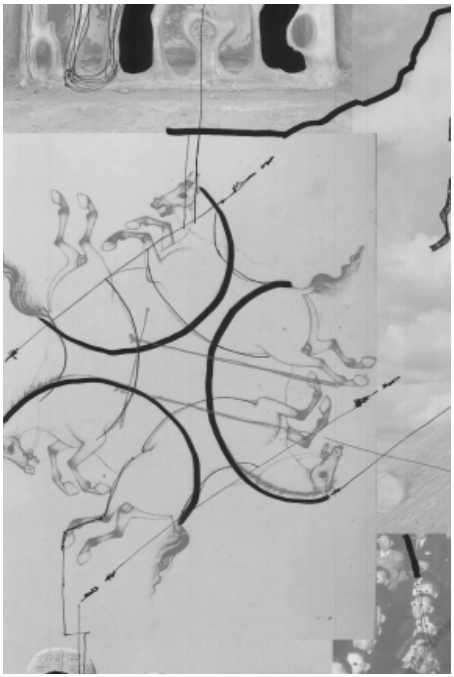


Fig. 8

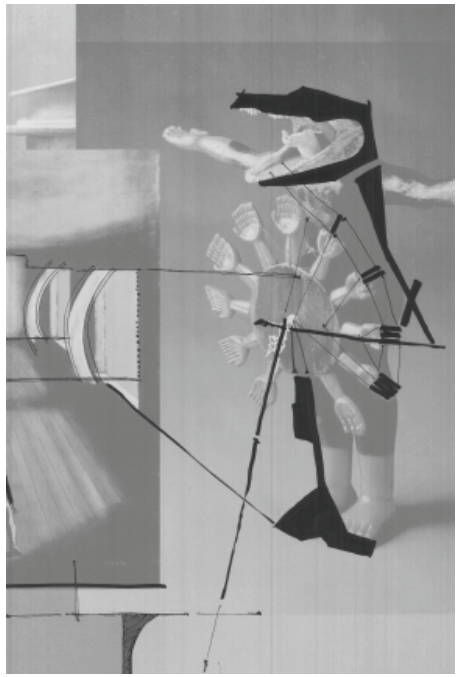


Fig. 9 | 10

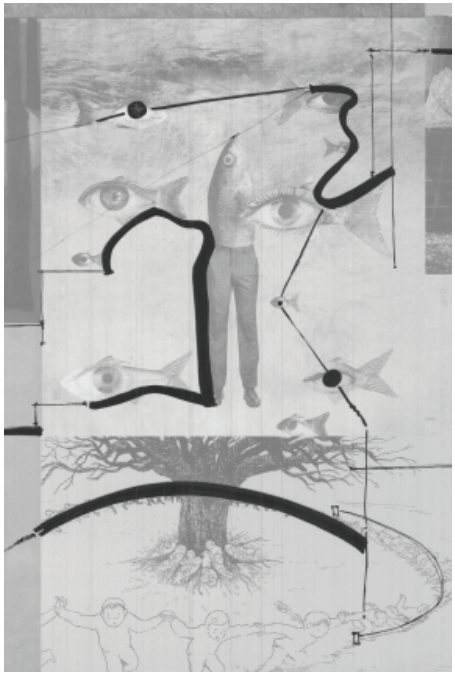
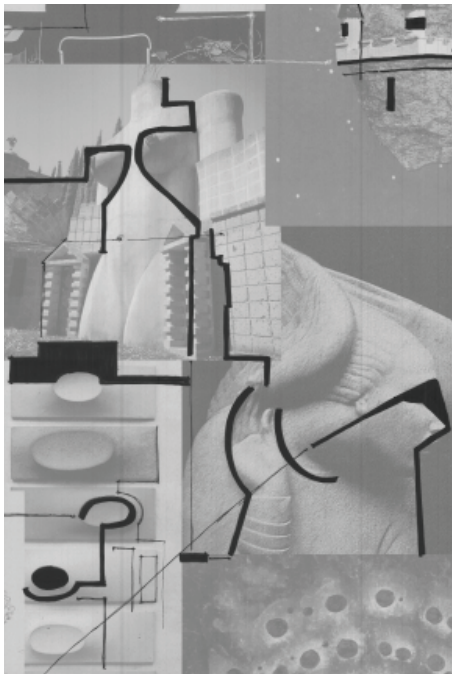


Fig. 11



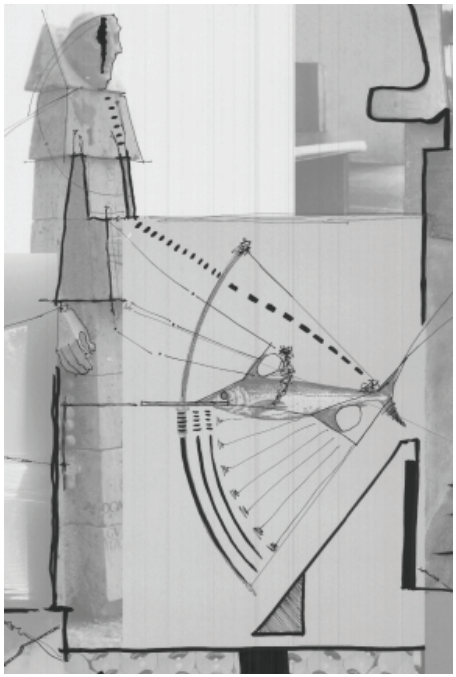


Fig. 12 | 13

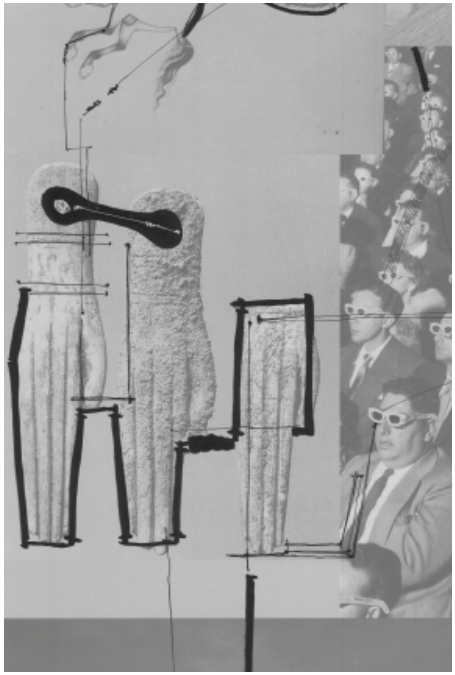
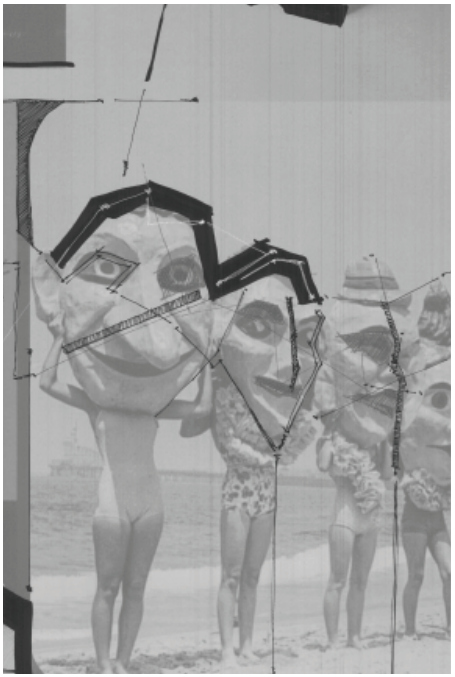


Fig. 14



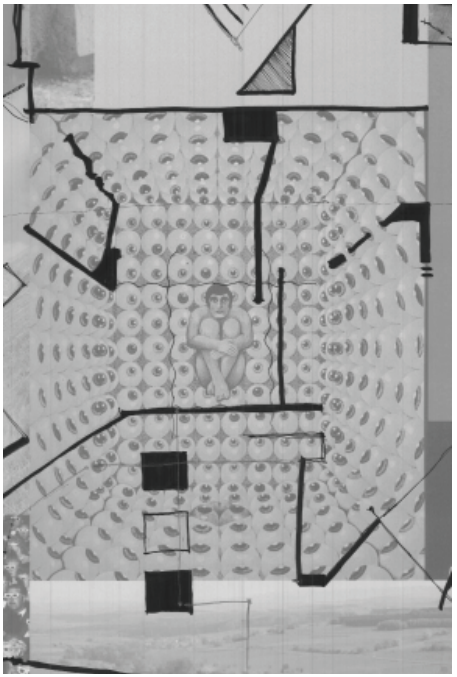


Fig. 15 | 16

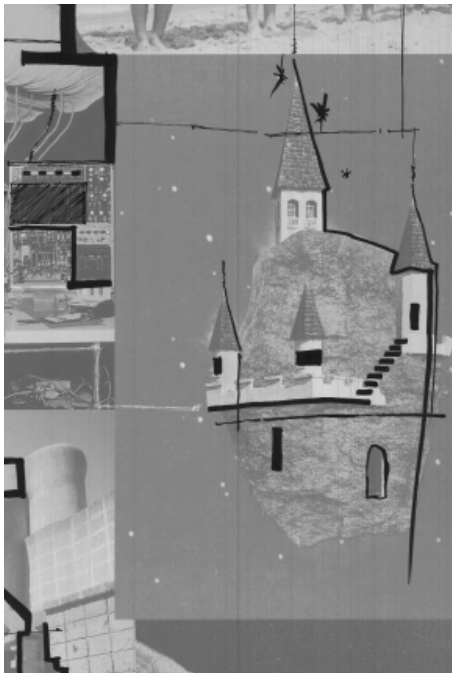


Fig. 17

Architectural Phenomenology and Experiential Space.

Architectural phenomenology emphasizes that architecture is not merely a physical object but a spatial condition through which human beings perceive and interpret the world. As Juhani Pallasmaa claims, "architectural structures humanize the world by giving it a human measure and a horizon of judgment and meaning"[34]. In this sense, architecture mediates the relationship between human perception and the surrounding environment. Architectural space is therefore encountered through the body and mind, where its temporal, atmospheric, and sensory qualities unfold through movement, memory, and lived experience[34]. From a phenomenological perspective, space cannot be understood as abstract geometry alone but must be considered a lived condition shaped by embodied perception and multisensory engagement. Alberto Pérez-Gómez, from a similar position, also argues that architecture's meaning emerges through experience rather than purely through intellectual interpretation[37].

The philosophical foundation of this understanding was discussed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose phenomenology emphasizes the inseparable relationship between perception and the lived body. As he writes, "My perception is not a sum of visual, tactile, and audible givens: I perceive in a total way with my whole being"[29]. Pallasmaa extends this perspective by arguing that spatial perception emerges through the interaction of bodily movement, sensory engagement, and psychological processes[34]. Holl, Pallasmaa, and Pérez-Gómez further support the theory that architecture is understood through phenomenal zones of light, color, sound, and time[23].

Within this phenomenological framework, spatial experience is shaped not only by sensory perception but also by memory and imagination. Pallasmaa argues that architectural images are actively engaged with bodily awareness through processes of internalization, identification, and projection[32]. As he writes, "we do not confront the cosmos unprotected and unmediated as we apply consciously and unconsciously perceived, remembered or imagined architectural images to structure our experiences, thoughts and metaphors"[34]. Architectural environ-

ments, therefore, influence perception not solely through their physical configuration but through the cognitive associations and memories they evoke.

Peter Zumthor elaborates extensively on the experiential and atmospheric dimensions of architecture, emphasizing the poetic meaning of building materials, the activities occurring within them, and the emotional and memorial values that architecture holds. Architecture, therefore, functions as a medium that organizes movement, perception, and emotional experience, where buildings are not passive visual objects but environments that structure actions, interactions, and interpretations of space. Over time, architectural materials weather and age, producing atmospheres that evoke memory, nostalgia, and emotional resonance[68]. Pallasmaa similarly describes the erosion of materials as the transition of architecture from a purely functional object to a condition of poetic experience, in which the passage of time intensifies its emotional meaning[34]. Gaston Bachelard likewise describes the house as a repository of memory and imagination, suggesting that the lived meaning of domestic space extends beyond its physical construction to the emotional associations it accumulates over time[2]. Harry Mallgrave further supports this concept by arguing that architecture engages human perception through biological and emotional processes[33]. Architectural experience arises through the interaction between environment, body, and emotion, emphasizing that spatial perception is fundamentally grounded in human sensory and cognitive systems[33].

Another important theoretical element of architectural experience is the temporal nature of space. As mentioned, architectural space unfolds through the movement of the body and progression of the mind, developing spatial perception through a sequence of moments. This sequence of moments, including but not limited to the psychological activities of anticipation, orientation, and memory, enables the psyche to navigate a space. Rather than understanding a space through static representations such as floor plans and elevations, the psyche tends to experience architectural space through the body and its surrounding environment[28] [34]. As the body approaches, enters, and navigates a space, the psyche organizes its intentions, perceptions, and understanding of the space[34]. Such psychological activity suggests a sequence of spatial transitions that guide perception and interpretation of architecture.

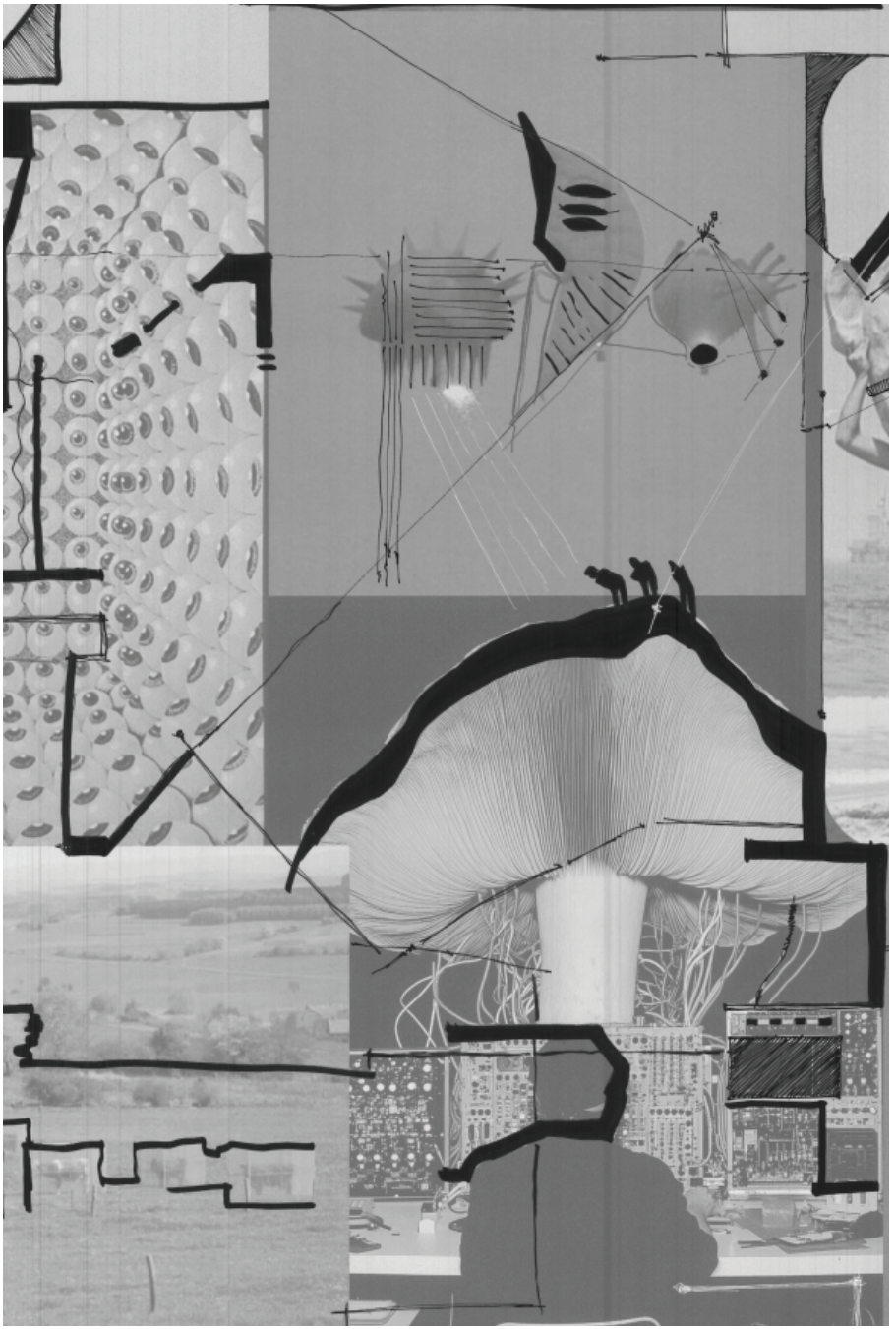


Fig. 18

“We are actively constructing the world with our bodies through our emotional and sensory-motor systems.”

Harry F. Mallgrave, 2009

Relationship between Dream Environment and Architecture.

As discussed, dreams function as internally generated spatial environments governed by cognitive-emotional logic rather than physical law. This part explores in depth how these spatial environments are constructed within the human cognitive system and their relationship to architecture.

Freud argues that dreams are the condensation of meanings into a single image, where dreamers' underlying desires and emotions are illustrated through unrelated objects, and that the mind attempts to rationalize the irrational through such mechanisms[3]. Howard M. Katz raised a similar claim, stating that "The dreamer often portrays wishes, conflicts, or current problems in terms of visual-spatial representations and metaphors"[27]. Both perspectives suggest that dreams organize meaning through spatial representations. As Jung further discussed, dreams often carry a paradox that, after careful analysis and interpretation, appears as a sign of psychological depth. Besides the narrative context of dreams, the psyche frequently uses spatial representation to connect and relate to deeper psychological meanings[27]. This illustrates the role of the mind in creating and shaping spatial environments, including architectural settings and landscapes within dreams, often referred to as dreamscapes.

In dream imagery, dreamers often move through and explore these dreamscapes, allowing the conscious mind to experience and interpret their spaces. In Athanasios Totlis' research, The Dream as Space, Time and Emotion (2011), he argues that the sense of space and objects in dreams both provide analytical value to the psychological depth and representation of the mind[67]. This observation supports the argument that spatial relationships exist within dream environments and contribute to the construction of meaning within them. Scientific studies further demonstrate that dream scenes contain structured spatial components. Gutman Music et al. show that dream situations often involve a set of narratives, characters, activities, and environmental settings, suggesting that dreams are not merely composed of random images or displaced meanings[38]. Although

dreamscapes may appear distorted from physical laws and may contain irregular shapes and forms, they often retain spatial coherence and internal structure, reflecting how the human cognitive system organizes spatial experience[26] [38].

Cicogna and Bosinelli elaborate on the cognitive mechanisms that generate dream environments, arguing that dreams emerge from the interaction between cognition and memory: "The dream is the product of the interaction of three components: bottom-up activation of mnemonic elements, top-down interpretative processes, and monitoring of phenomenal experience"[9]. Within dreams, conflicting cues between cognition, memory, and emotion often produce environments characterized by fragmentation, shifting scale, and nonlinear transitions. Despite these distortions, spatial coherence persists within dreamscapes[6] [59] [3]. These conditions demonstrate the mind's tendency to organize space through experiential wholeness rather than strict consistency, suggesting that dream environments do not necessarily follow Euclidean spatial logic[25].

Jung's theory of the psyche provides an important conceptual foundation for understanding the relationship between dream logic and architecture. Jung argues that the psyche operates through wholeness rather than consistency, allowing contradictory perceptions and emotions to coexist[25] [26]. This condition helps explain how a space can be experienced as both familiar and unsettling, or comforting and restrictive, at the same time, linking the emotional qualities of dreamscapes to the psychological interpretation of spaces in waking life[27]. Haun and Tononi articulate this idea clearly by stating that "The canvas of space can be decomposed in terms of the phenomenal distinctions and relations that compose the experience"[20].

Dream spatiality thus becomes relevant to the phenomenology of space, providing insight into how spatial experience can remain meaningful even when formal consistency is disrupted[20] [67]. This perspective also resonates with the phenomenology of architecture, aligning with the arguments of Norberg-Schulz, Pallasmaa, and Merleau-Ponty[39] [34] [28] that spatial experience often engages human perception, memory, and emotion.

what you see might not

be what you think

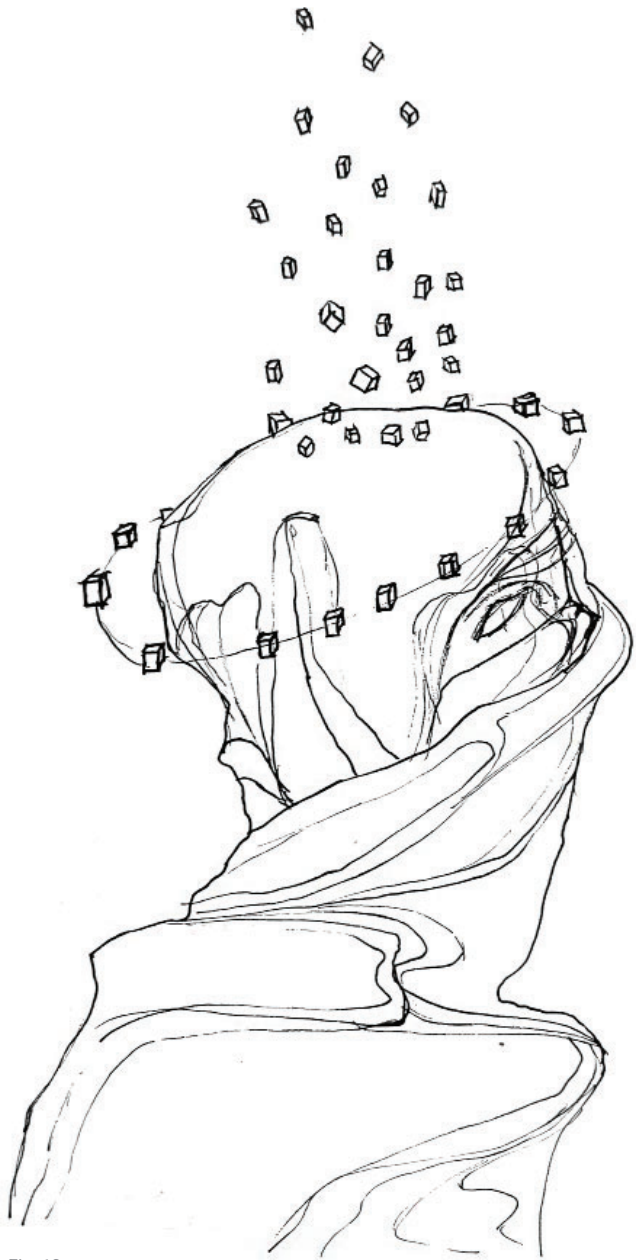


Fig. 19

Surrealism in Dream Environment and Architecture

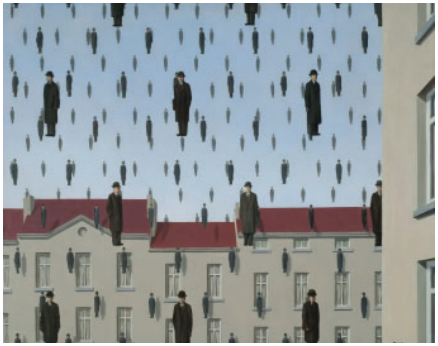
The notion of dreaming inspired major art movements, most notably surrealism. Under the heavy influence of Sigmund Freud's **The Interpretation of Dreams** (1899), Andre Breton wrote the **Manifesto of Surrealism** (1924), with the objective of liberating thought, language, and human experience from the oppressive constraints of logic and reason[47] [37]. Following which, a group of surreal artists, including

Salvador Dalí
Yves Tanguy
Giorgio de Chirico
René Magritte
Joan Miró
Frida Kahlo
M.C. Escher

explored the potential of surrealism in art and architecture.

Giorgio De Chirico | Plaza of Italy (Piazza d'Italia), [oil paint], 1960.

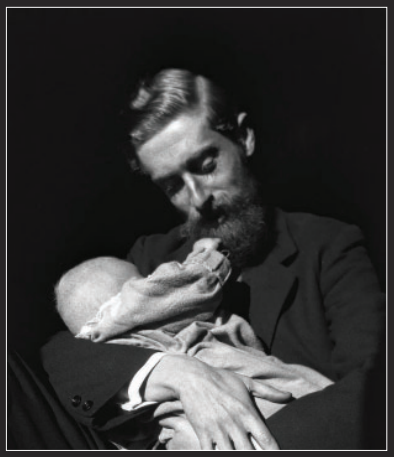
Joan Miró | The Tilled Field (La terre labourée, [oil paint], 1923.



René Magritte | Golconda [oil paint], 1953

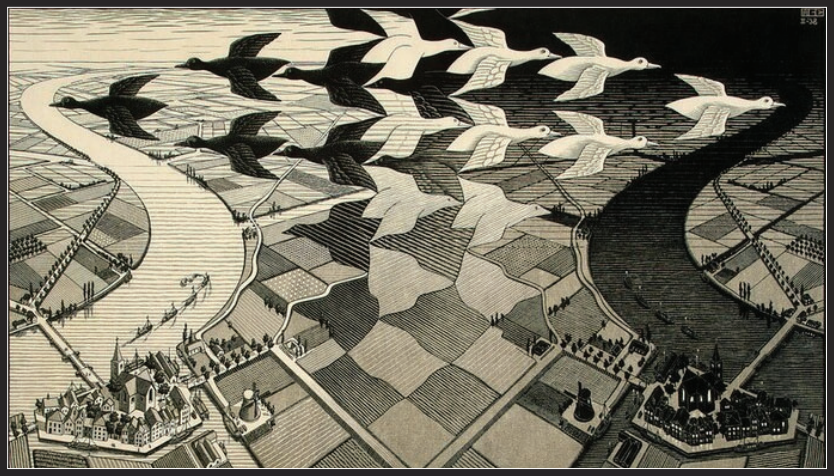
Frida Kahlo | Self-Portrait on the Borderline Between Mexico and the United States [oil paint], 1923

Salvador Dalí | Birth of Liquid Desires [oil paint], 1932

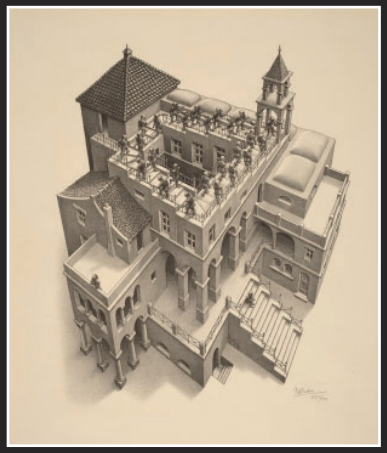


M.C. Escher,

whose works focus extensively on an architectural context, explores cognitive contradictions that the human mind can hold in the absence of physical law, suggesting the mind's capacity to tolerate greater wholeness and ambiguity[1] [28]. Through the illustration of recursive structures, paradoxical gravity, and spatial ambiguity, his paintings register space emotionally, symbolically, and relationally rather than metrically, revealing the mind's abilities in navigating conflicting internal realities, further



Day and Night, M.C. Escher, [woodcut] 1938.



Ascending and Descending, M.C. Escher, [lithograph], 1960.

Another World, M.C. Escher, [woodcut], 1947.

Print Gallery, M.C. Escher, [lithograph], 1956.

Giorgio de Chirico,

explores the ambiguity of architecture and space, focusing on lighting, shadow, and the spatial relationships within and between buildings[33] [32]. However, rather than portraying architecture as it appears in reality, De Chirico employs a specific style that exaggerates shadows, utilizes an unusual palette, and distorts or rescales objects surrounding the buildings, producing environments that appear both familiar and unsettling[33] [53]. Such a style challenges viewers' understanding and perception of traditional architectural representation, presenting a dream-like and disruptive architectural condition that reinforces the ambiguity of space, function, and meaning[33]. De Chirico's constructed environments reflect the mind's cognitive process of organizing fragmented, displaced, and ambiguous elements into experientially coherent spatial conditions[43] [4]. This, along with Escher's impossible structures, further supports the argument that spatial coherence does not rely solely on geometric consistency and that the mind is able to construct its own understanding of the environment through psychological behaviors, aligning with both Freud's dream mechanisms and Jung's theory of psychological wholeness[26] [17]. Thus, both Escher and De Chirico serve as critical precedents of surreal artists for architects to examine how humans inhabit psychological spaces that transcend physical laws[28] [56].

Ariadne , Giorgio de Chirico, 1913.

Mystery and Melancholy of a Street, Giorgio de Chirico, 1914.

oneiric \ oʊˈnaɪrɪk \ adjective

> : of, relating to or suggestive of dreams; dreamy

oneiric \ oʊˈnaɪrɪk \ adjective

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> : of, relating to or suggestive of dreams; dreamy

Yves Tanguy | Promontory Palace (1931)

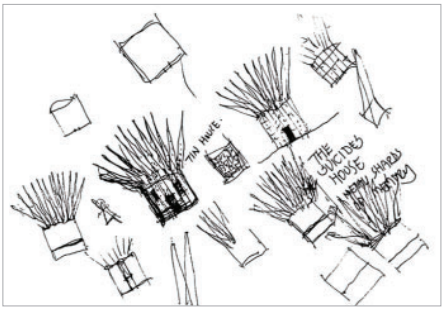
Philosopher Peter Sloterdijk observes that "the eyes are the organic prototype of philosophy. Their enigma is that they not only can see but are also able to see themselves seeing," illustrating how vision has historically been elevated above other sensory modes of perception[59]. The following precedents challenge the distinction of art and architecture and merge the outer constructed world, empirically defined as house, with inner dream worlds of emotion, memory, and trauma. One could argue that these are examples of the house symbolizing the psyche, and in the manner of Sloterdijk, are the houses then looking inward at themselves.

Within the oneiric framework of architecture, spatial experience is shaped by memory and the subconscious. In The Poetics of Space, Bachelard describes **the "oneiric" house as a repository of dreams, memory, and imagination, suggesting that the lived meaning of domestic space extends beyond its physical construction to the emotional associations it accumulates over time**[2]. Joan Ockman describes Bachelard's house and its connection to the psyche as an "abode of human consciousness," and states that the task of phenomenology is to study how the house "accommodates consciousness, or the half-dreaming consciousness Bachelard calls reverie." She further argues that "Bachelard's notion of the role played by chance and mutability in the emergence of the poetic image is virtually identical to the creative principle of the surrealists." The Surrealist, can thus be argued, **freed from strict, rational ways of representing space, comes closest to capturing the fluid and ever-changing nature of dream images and dream space**[37].

John Hejduk's The House of the Suicide and The House of the Mother of the Suicide are perfect examples that illustrate Gaston Bachelard's idea that physical structures can carry accumulated emotional meaning[2] (1980–1986). Inspired by David Shapiro's poem The Funeral of Jan Palach, Hejduk designed a tin, fully sealed house to metaphorically resemble Jan Palach, who committed suicide at the age of 20 during a political protest. This structure is further described as "an empty abandoned house with the branches of a tree rising upwards above it, they are the metal shards of memory"[62].

Situated next to the House of the Suicide is the House of the Mother, designed and constructed by a group of students from Georgia. This house represents the mother of Jan Palach. A door is located at the back where visitors enter and proceed to the top floor via steps, arriving at a window that looks onto the House of the Suicide, representing the son.

This project demonstrates a oneiric architecture that not only adopts the aesthetic qualities of dreamscape but also engages the psychological interpretation of visitors' minds, as visitors unfold both its narrative and its architectural structure. The result is a wholeness of experience, with emotional response and architectural meaning in depth, where architecture unites humanity, history, and spatial experience.



1 | Jan Palach

2 | John Hejduk's sketch

3 | House of Mother [left]
House of Suicide [right]

4 | Mother of Jan Palach

Translation of Dream Logic to Architectural Language .

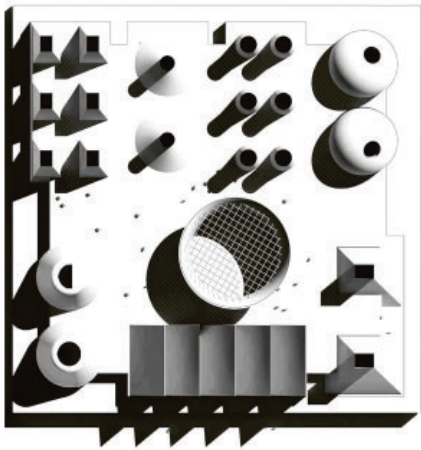
Dreams construct conscious and interactive environments within the mind itself, allowing the individual to experience and navigate spatial conditions in a self-generated perceptual world[4] [43]. Dream scenes are partially derived from the dreamer's memories and experiences in waking life, while other elements emerge from psychological processes and emotional cognition. As a result, dreams frequently reorganize environmental settings, characters, and activities into structured scenes, suggesting an underlying system of spatial organization[9] [55] [38]. **From this perspective, dream space can be understood as a composition of interacting components, similar to how architectural environments are constructed through spatial relationships**. Spatial experience in both dreaming and architecture unfolds through perception, interpretation, and emotional engagement[20].

Rather than perceiving dreamscapes and their structural logic as merely symbolic or stylistic references, it is important to recognize their **broader implications for architectural thinking**. Dream logic, understood as a cognitive model for spatial organization, offers an alternative framework through which architects may approach the design of space[4] [43] [20]. Instead of serving only as visual inspiration, dream environments reveal the relationship between psychological behaviors and spatial cognition, including key ideas such as nonlinear

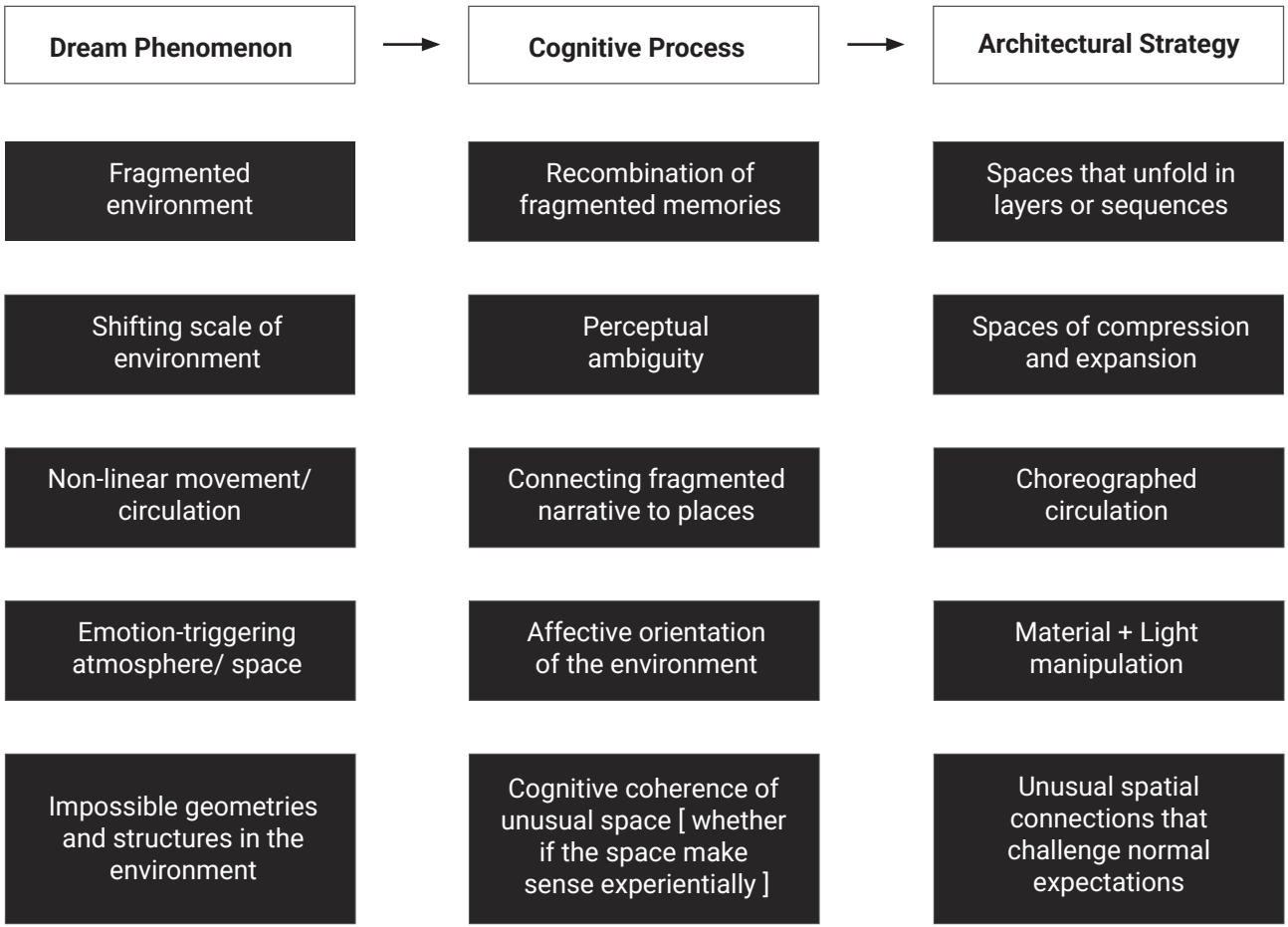
spatial sequences, shifting spatial boundaries, emotional spatial orientation, and layered memory environments[38] [69] [49]. By examining these processes, architects may draw insight into new ways of conceptualizing spatial experience[34] [21]. Such insights can inform different stages of the design process, including the production of written explorations, conceptual sketches, physical models, sculptural investigations, and digitally fabricated prototypes[35] [10]. In this way, dream logic becomes not a stylistic reference but a conceptual tool through which architects can consider an alternative way of constructing and perceiving spatial experience[33] [52]. The following diagrams represent a translation of dream logic into architectural language.

Dream Phenomenon, the generated content and elements of the dreamscape, is first translated into **Cognitive Process**, referring to the psychological interpretation of dream content, and then further translated into **Architectural Strategy**, the architectural language commonly used in design practice. This chart proposes a potential alterna tive approach to individual- or spe cial-group-oriented architectural design, for example, in an orphanage, healthcare facility, cultural center, or cemetery. However, the primary objective of this research is to emphasize the importance of recognizing and understanding the role of dreams in human spatial cognition.

Gonzalo Fonseca [Photograph] , n.d.



[Book Cover] , MIT Press, 2024


Dream Phenomenon
Cognitive Process
Architectural Strategy
Fragmented environment
Recombination of fragmented memories
Spaces that unfold in layers or sequences
Shifting scale of environment
Perceptual ambiguity
Spaces of compression and expansion
Non-linear movement/ circulation
Connecting fragmented narrative to places
Choreographed circulation
Emotion-triggering atmosphere/ space
Affective orientation of the environment
Material + Light manipulation
Impossible geometries and structures in the environment
Cognitive coherence of unusual space [whether if the space make sense experientially]
Unusual spatial connections that challenge normal expectations

[Fragmented environment]

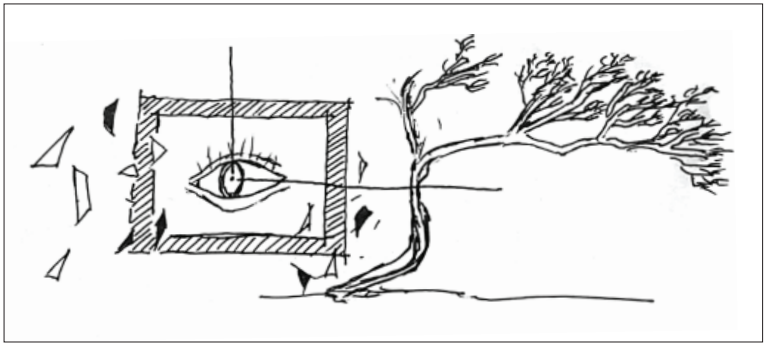


Fig. 20

[Spaces that unfold in layers or sequences]

Habitacle n°1, André Bloc [Sculpture], Meudon, 1962

[Shifting scale of environment]

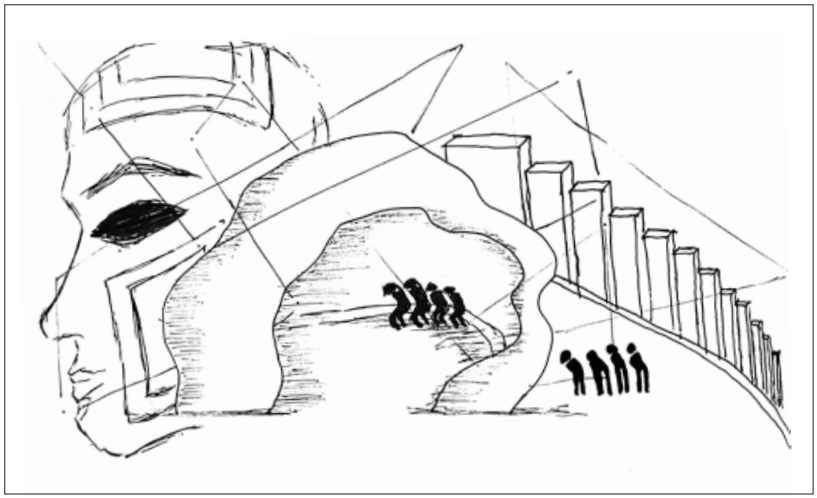
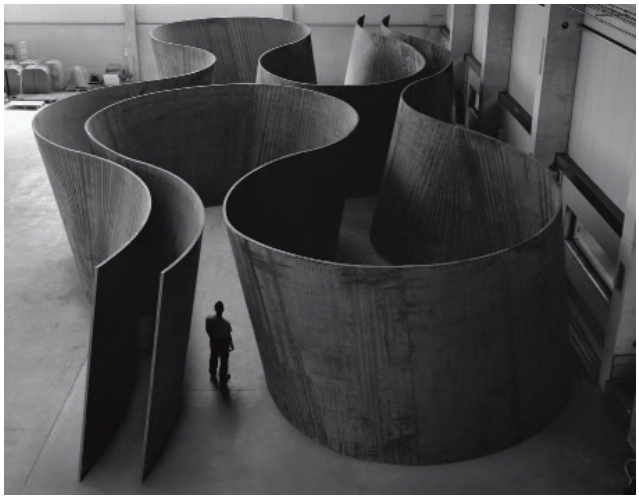


Fig. 21

[Spaces of compression and expansion]



Inside Out, Richard Serra [Sculpture], New York, 2013

[Non-linear movement/ circulation]

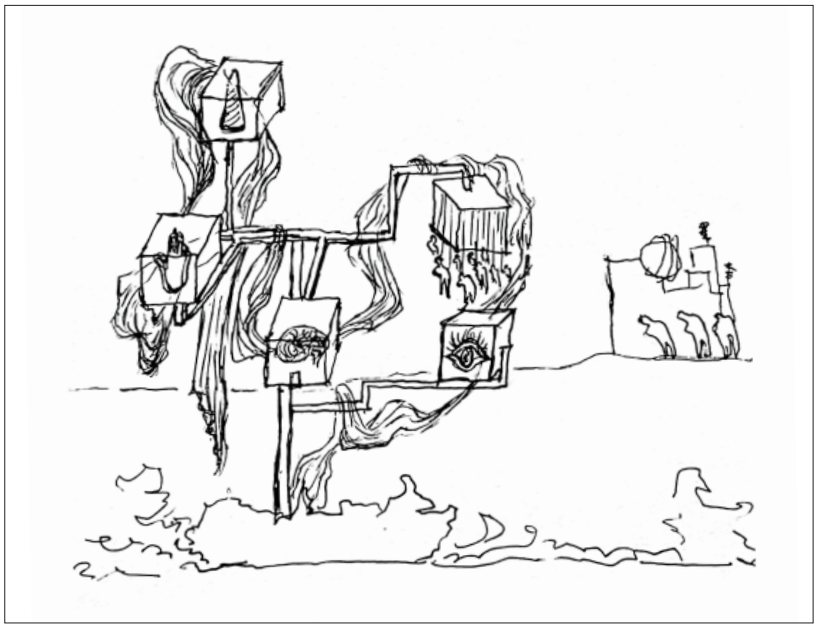


Fig. 22

[Choreographed circulation]

Tomba Brion, Carlo Scarpa [Architecture], Treviso, 1968 - 1979

[Emotion-triggering atmosphere/ space]

Fig. 23

[Material + Light manipulation]

Chapelle Notre-Dame du Haut, Le Corbusier [Architecture], Ronchamp, 1950

[Impossible geometries and structures in the environment]

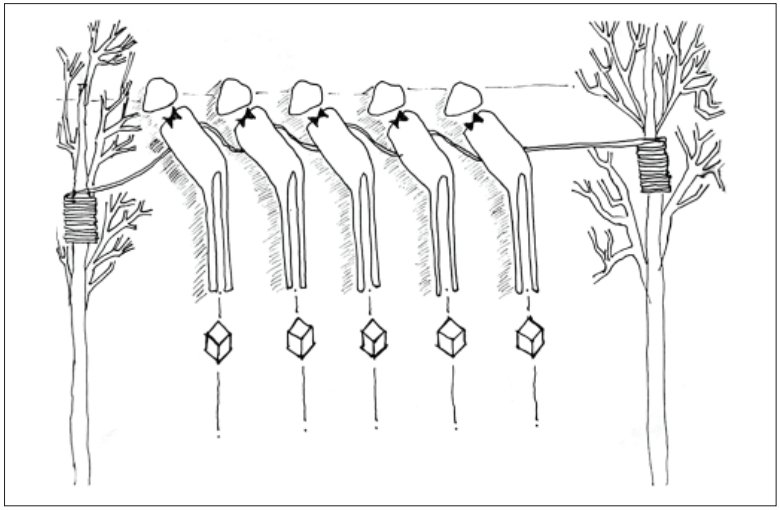
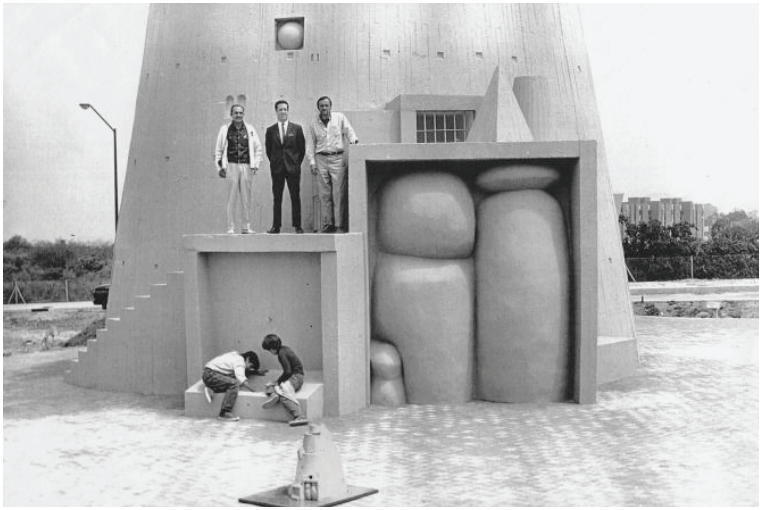


Fig. 24

[Unusual spatial connections that challenge normal expectations]



Torre de los Vientos, Gonzalo Fonseca, México 1968

This figure-ground study model translates the abstract logic of dreaming into a spatial and architectural investigation. Developed from the diagram of dream phenomena, cognitive processes, and architectural strategies, the model materializes how fragmented, nonlinear, and perceptually ambiguous dream conditions can be reinterpreted as coherent spatial constructs. Rather than representing a literal site, it operates as a speculative terrain in which elements are arranged through contrast, void, and discontinuity, allowing relationships between parts to emerge through perception and movement. The carved voids, layered surfaces, and displaced geometries reflect the instability and fluidity of dream environments while maintaining an underlying spatial order. Inspired by Bernard Tschumi's figure-ground explorations in *Event-Cities 5: Poetics*, and informed by the spatial paradoxes of M. C. Escher and the symbolic constructions of Gonzalo Fonseca, the model serves as a physical translation of dream logic into architectural language, bridging cognition and form.

Figure - ground study model | Site A

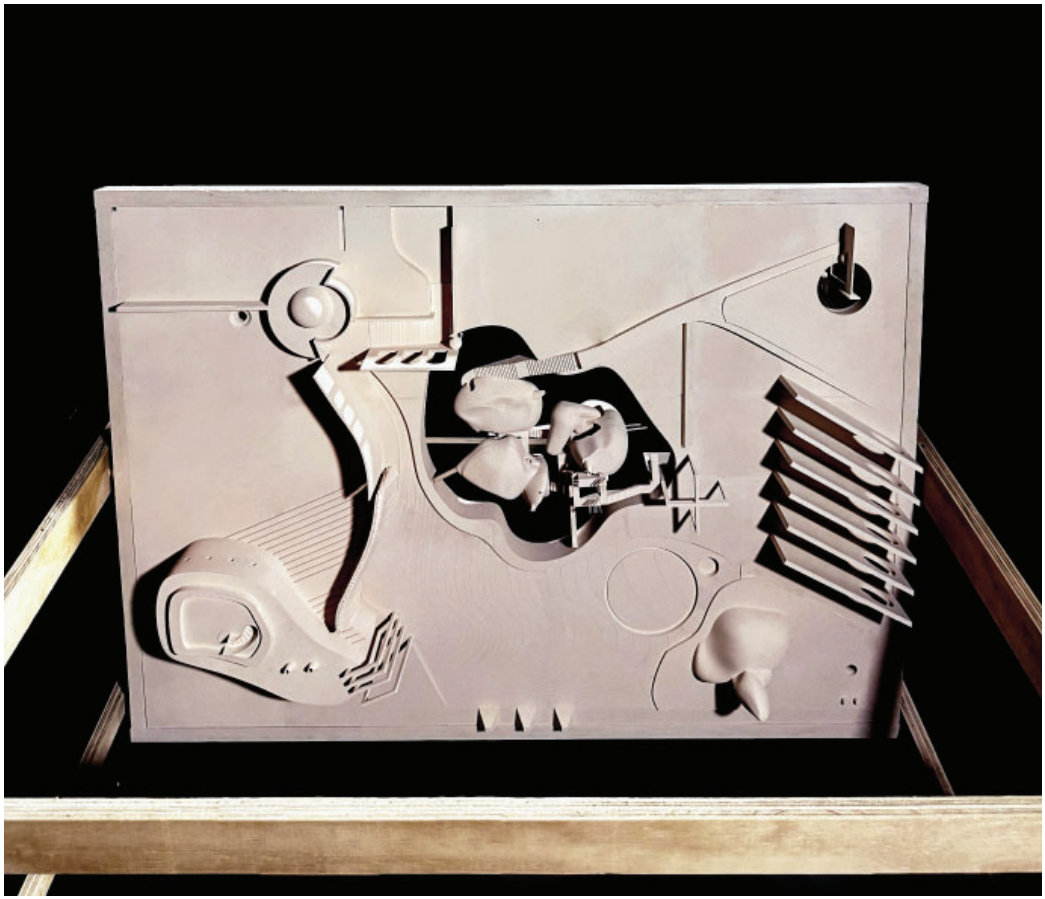


Figure - ground study model | Site B

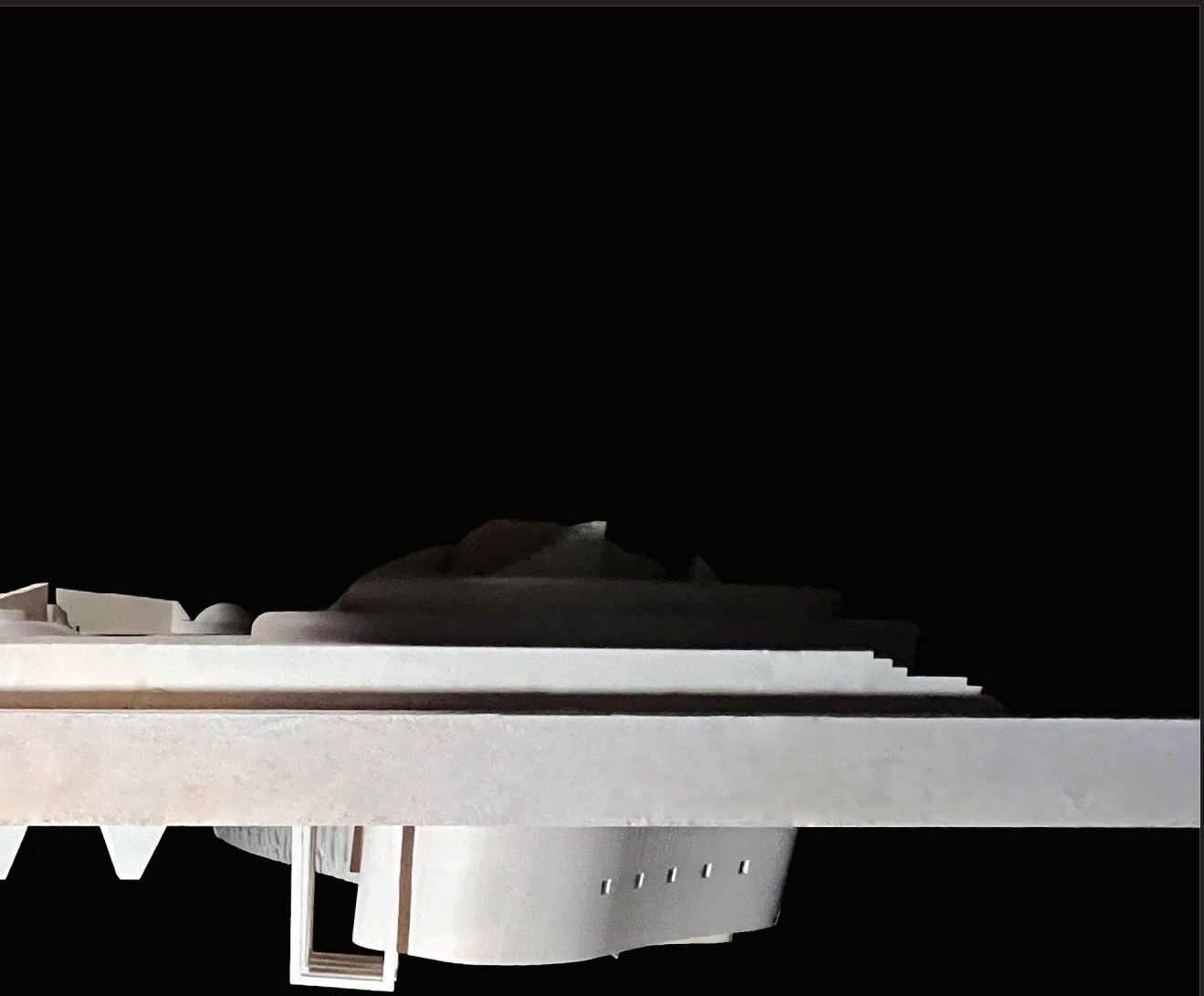


Figure - ground study model | Horizon view

In addition to the chart, this study analyzes another pair of psychological activities to further elaborate in depth on the translation of cognitive processes into architectural strategies. Visual studies are incorporated to explore the psychological activities of "anticipation" and "confusion" within spatial cognitive processes, translating these processes into visual materials. These visualizations are intended to assist architects in better understanding and interpreting spatial cognition.

[Anticipation]

[Confusion]

[Anticipation]

The mind "expects" a space before it is fully revealed. Anticipation occurs when perception is guided by information ahead of physical experience, often triggered by partial visibility, directional light, sound, or spatial narrowing. It is the moment when the psyche projects itself forward, inwardly constructing an expectation of what is ahead[44] [21]. For instance, in many commercial and residential architectural layouts that provide a single dominant axis, such as a narrow corridor leading to a closed door, this process is limited, as the outcome becomes predictable and reduces cognitive engagement[29].

Fig. 25

[Confusion]

The mind "questions" a space before it is fully understood, where the mind attempts to interpret the space momentarily before proceeding to continue exploring. This is the moment when orientation becomes uncertain, bodily movement slows, and awareness is heightened. This psychological activity is not necessarily negative, but rather a natural interpretive process that allows the mind to evaluate multiple readings of space[69] [24].

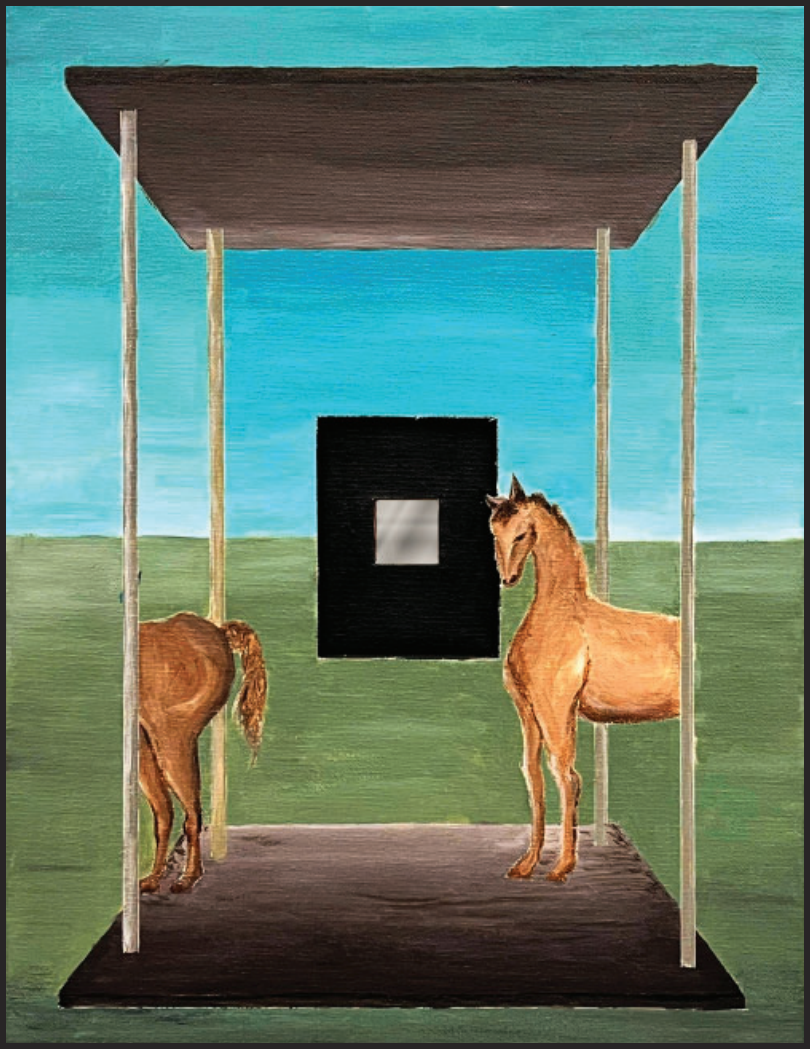


Fig. 26

Discussion and Conclusion

Following Pallasmaa's critique of the dominance of visual representation in modern architectural discourse, this research seeks to assist architects in understanding the importance of experiential architectural design and the actual psychological mechanisms of human spatial cognition. In The Eyes of the Skin, he argues that contemporary architectural practice has increasingly prioritized visual form over multisensory experience, indirectly neglecting the value of interaction between the occupant and the architecture[1]. This condition, often described as ocularcentrism, reflects a broader philosophical privileging of sight within Western thought (2005). Consequently, architectural environments are frequently designed and interpreted primarily through visual imagery rather than through the full range of sensory experience. Phenomenological approaches, hence, challenge this emphasis on visual imagery by emphasizing the embodied and multisensory nature of spatial perception.

Architectural designs that prioritize consistency and legibility often minimize contradiction, producing spaces that are functionally clear but emotionally limited[34] [21]. By contrast, spaces that allow ambiguity and layered interpretation align more closely with the psychological structure of experience[25] [34]. Dream environments, which are constructed through experiential relationships and psychological meaning, therefore offer an alternative logic for understanding spatial coherence that arises from lived experience rather than strict linear order, reflecting the psyche's tendency to organize space through wholeness rather than consistency[46] [27] [31] [38].

While the primary objective of this research is to emphasize the importance of recognizing and understanding the value of dreams in human spatial cognition within a phenomenological framework, it also presents opportunities for architectural application. The study of dream logic has demonstrated the mind's capacity to construct spatial environments internally[43] [55] [50]. Dream scenes—partially derived from experiences in waking life, and partially from psychological and emotional cognition—reorganize environmental settings, characters, and activities into structured scenes, suggesting an underlying system of spatial

organization[41] [38] [4]. Rather than perceiving dreamscapes and their structural logic as merely symbolic or stylistic references, it is important to recognize their broader implications for architectural thinking. Dream logic, understood as a cognitive model of spatial organization, thus offers an alternative framework for approaching the design of space[20] [21].

While most architectural spaces are commonly seen, from a phenomenological perspective, as related to particular memories or traumas—for example, a memorial or cemetery—there are opportunities to project meaning onto more banal yet no less resonant environments[2] [25] [1]. In dreams, the empirical and banal realms of the inner world become meaningful through deeply ingrained memories of the incidental. A dream of an ordinary encounter in a shopping mall is overlaid with a sense of foreboding, or the familiar spaces of a house begin to unravel into domestic tension. Spatial meaning is therefore not derived solely from the physical environment but emerges through the interaction between spatial cognitive processes and psychological activity within the mind[9] [16] [18].

By examining how spatial coherence emerges within dream environments, this research seeks to expand architectural thinking on experience, perception, and the mental construction of space[4] [33]. It proposes an alternative cognitive framework for understanding spatial organization that extends beyond geometry, material manipulation, and functional requirements, focusing instead on how space is constructed and experienced mentally[30] [35] [13].

The findings suggest that spatial meaning does not arise solely from physical order or visual clarity, but from the mind's capacity to organize perception, memory, and emotion into coherent experiential conditions[43] [34] [71]. Dream logic, therefore, offers a productive framework through which architectural design may engage more directly with human cognition and lived experience.

Future Research

Limitations of this research include the inaccuracy of dream reports, as they are recorded by subjects in a waking state and, in some cases, recalled from a distant period. This process may involve memory reconstruction, omission, and fragmentation. However, this study relies on identifying recurring spatial patterns and characteristics of dream environments across multiple individuals, rather than on the accuracy of any single account. Future research may address this limitation by integrating neuroscientific methods, such as the study of real-time REM data recorded in controlled sleep laboratory settings.

While multiple dream reports are collected and referenced in this study, the sample size remains limited and serves only as an initial basis for recognizing recurring spatial patterns. It is therefore important to note that the spatial conditions identified in this research are not universal across all individuals, cultures, or psychological contexts. Future studies should aim to expand the dataset and include more diverse populations to strengthen the reliability of these observations.

Although this research establishes a conceptual relationship between dream logic and architectural phenomena, the discussion remains exploratory and theoretical. It is not based on empirical testing or built work and should not be interpreted as professional, prescriptive design guidelines. Future research could involve design experiments or spatial installations to examine how cognitive spatial principles derived from dreams influence human perception and experience in real-world environments.

While these limitations are inherent in the non-measurable, experiential nature of dreaming, they do not diminish the value of the investigation. Rather, they highlight the potential for further interdisciplinary research, in which additional methods and approaches could be developed to refine and support the study.

Fig. 27

Figures

Fig.1 ***Strange Scape*** in Dream Journal [Sketch] Visual Analysis , Jingying Zheng, 2025.

Fig.2 ***My Dream*** in Dream Journal [Collage with source from internet] Visual Analysis , Jingying Zheng, 2025.

Fig.3 ***My Dream, but Parallel World*** in Dream Journal [Collage with source from internet] Visual Analysis , Jingying Zheng, 2025.

Fig.4 ***Reliquary of Consciousness*** [Design Studio Model] Visual Analysis , Jingying Zheng, 2024.

Fig.5 ***Human Pot*** in Dream Journal [Sketch] Visual Analysis , Jingying Zheng, 2025.

Fig.6 -18 ***Dreamscapes*** in Architectural Diagram Study [Collage with source from internet + Sketch] Visual Analysis , Jingying Zheng, 2025.

Fig.19 ***What's in My Mind?*** in Dream Journal [Sketch] Visual Analysis , Jingying Zheng, 2025.

Fig.20 ***The Eye Sees It All*** in Dream Journal [Sketch] Visual Analysis , Jingying Zheng, 2025.

Fig.21 ***The New World*** in Dream Journal [Sketch] Visual Analysis , Jingying Zheng, 2025.

Fig.22 ***Structure of the Dreaming Brain*** in Dream Journal [Sketch] Visual Analysis , Jingying Zheng, 2026.

Fig.23 ***Mountain Head*** in Dream Journal [Sketch] Visual Analysis , Jingying Zheng, 2026.

Fig.24 **Electric Poles** in Dream Journal [Sketch] Visual Analysis , Jingying Zheng, 2026.

Fig.25 ***A Hallway*** in Dream Interpretation and Translational Study [Acrylic Painting] Visual Analysis , Jingying Zheng, 2026.

Fig.26 ***A Confused Horse*** in Dream Interpretation and Translational Study [Mixed - Media Painting] Visual Analysis , Jingying Zheng, 2026.

Fig.27 ***Floating Gentlemen*** in Dream Journal [Sketch] Visual Analysis , Jingying Zheng, 2026.

Notes:

Figures 1, 5, 19–24, and 27 are hand-drawn images intended to visually and abstractly illustrate dreamscapes and dream content collected from both the author and interviewees. This series of sketches serves as a primary component of the dream journal. It is not intended to support theoretical arguments, but rather to explore the visual logic and patterns of dreaming.

Figures 2–3 are digital collages composed of multiple image sources. These works aim to depict the unstable, surreal, and often fragmented qualities of dreamscapes. Similar to the hand drawings, they are not intended to support theoretical arguments, but to examine the visual characteristics and underlying logic of dream experience.

Figures 6–18 are digital collages overlaid with hand-drawn diagrams. This series represents another key component of the dream journal, extending the visual study of dream logic. Rather than focusing solely on the surreal and unstable qualities of dreams, these images begin to investigate recurring patterns, spatial conditions, linework, and architectural relationships embedded within dreamscapes. Like the other visual studies, they are not intended as theoretical evidence, but as exploratory tools for understanding the structure and spatial logic of dreaming.

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Declaration of Interest Statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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